



AGENCY FOR THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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United Nations General Assembly
First Committee: Disarmament and International Security

Statement by

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Secretary-General of OPANAL

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New York

Mr Chairman,

On behalf of OPANAL – the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, I express to you our warmest congratulations for your election as Chairman of the I Committee, greetings extended to the members of the Bureau and the Secretariat. We have full confidence that you will lead us to a successful outcome.

This Session of the I Committee will be a historic one. Probably the most important one since the General Assembly adopted the CTBT in 1996. The member States of OPANAL are unanimous in supporting the recommendation by the Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations on convening a conference in 2017 to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

OPANAL and its member States are fully disposed to work next year for the achievement of this progressive development in the road towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

On 26 September, the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, celebrated here at the UN by a special meeting, OPANAL issued a Declaration, circulated as document A/C.1/71/2 of the General Assembly. It is worth noting that Latin America and the Caribbean, by means of its own specialized Organization, OPANAL, was the only region that made a formal and comprehensive statement on that occasion.

This shows the wisdom of the decision to include in the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean – Treaty of Tlatelolco – an institution, not only to ensure compliance but also to enhance the region’s expression and action against nuclear weapons. As the Treaty states in its preamble “militarily denuclearized zones are not and end in themselves” but a means to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

As it happens every three years, this Session of the General Assembly is expected to adopt a Resolution, under item 91 of the Agenda, on the Treaty of Tlatelolco. As in previous instances, we hope this Resolution will be adopted during this Session without a vote.

Mr Chairman,

On 14 February 2017, the Treaty of Tlatelolco will complete 50 years since its conclusion. The celebration will be highlighted by the XXV Session of OPANAL General Conference, meeting at the ministerial level in Mexico City with the participation of the States party to the Additional Protocols to the Treaty and international organizations in the field of disarmament. Civil society organizations are also being invited for their support and inspirational initiatives.

A high level international seminar on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons also in Mexico City, will be part of the commemoration.

It is appropriate and indeed important that States belonging to nuclear- weapons-free zones and Mongolia be involved in this celebration marking the first time a region decided to create a new institute of International Law, banning forever nuclear weapons from an immense area.

It is urgent to revitalize the contact and cooperation among nuclear-weapon-free zones. OPANAL remains totally disposed to facilitate the strengthening of a movement started 16 years ago which should not be discontinued in the interest of the 115 participating States.

OPANAL member States expect the events marking the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco will be more than a celebration. They could well be the launching pad of a year that may bring dramatic progress in our common effort to eliminate the greatest threat to our survival. By saying “our common effort” I am not excluding any State.

In the last 70 years all States have been declaring, one way or another, that they want the end of nuclear weapons. However, there is always something, a compulsive reason, like an element of fate, that prevents that goal to be reached. Words change and vary. “Deterrence”, it seems, is less used nowadays. It has now given place to “strategic stability”. Whatever the words, the reasons, the excuses, the intentions, the terrible threat remains with us.

Finally, Mr Chairman,

I wish to thank you for your fairness in acknowledging OPANAL's request to participate in the panel during the exchange with the High Representative and high officials of different agencies.

On the eve of completing 50 years, OPANAL is the only intergovernmental organization devoted to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons.

The 33 States members of OPANAL expect the consultation you are conducting will correct an anomalous situation which amounts to a discrimination.